

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

sub. a1

An apparatus for the unique and permanent identification of an article of luggage includes a bar code label or a microchip or both attached to the article of luggage. The bar code label or microchip contains a unique identification number that uniquely identifies that particular article of luggage apart from all other articles of luggage. A data base is provided that includes a file appertaining to each article of luggage. The file includes the name and address of the owner of the article of luggage and is updated by the owner, as desired, to include his travel plans, for example, what hotel he will be staying at and for what dates. Only the owner (or his representative) may change the contents of the file. Access to the contents of the file is provided to the owner subsequent to a communication with the data base that includes the unique identification number and an owner's personal identification number. Authorized users, such as airline companies, may view but not alter the contents of the file subsequent to a communication to the data base that includes the unique identification number and an authorized user identification number. The contents of the file are of use in locating and delivering the article of luggage back to the owner if it was lost, delayed, or separated apart from the owner.